

Best Practices

Reducing Traffic Mishaps

Are you losing Sailors in PMV and motorcycle crashes? Is drunk driving part of the problem? If the answer to either or both of these questions is “yes,” here are some tools fleet units are using successfully to drive down the numbers:

Aboard USS *Reuben James* (FFG-57)

During the quarter ending Sept. 30, 2004, this ship held classroom training for all 18 of its Sailors who ride motorcycles. This training focused on safe practices, Department of the Navy regulations on motorcycle-specific PPE, courses available, and proper licensing. The ship aggressively worked to ensure all Sailors who ride motorcycles have completed or are scheduled to complete the required training. The ship also scheduled the motorcycle-safety program manager for the Motorcycle-Instructor course. That course will enable the ship to be self-sufficient and to conduct its own in-depth, motorcycle-safety training.

Training on off-duty safety for alcohol awareness, as well as leisure activities, was given to *Reuben James* Sailors on a continuous basis at every level, from divisional training to all-hands calls. Taking the initiative and displaying strong leadership, the First Class Petty Officers’ Association implemented a program for Sailors to be issued taxi vouchers. This program ensures the availability of a safe ride home for any Sailor drinking on liberty without a designated driver. Those who take advantage of this program only have a small bill to pay at the end of the month. The ship published steady reminders about the taxi vouchers in the Plan of the Day.

Aboard USS *Curts* (FFG-38)

Although deployed, this ship simply shifted its training focus from everyday driving complacency to loss of driving proficiency. *Curts* scheduled a CHP officer to visit the ship before its return to

homeport (San Diego). It also scheduled a Florida officer to visit the ship before a mid-deployment port visit in Mayport.

All motorcyclists aboard *Curts* are identified, and quotas are pursued for everyone who still requires an approved motorcycle-safety course. The ship’s traffic-safety program manager interviews each motorcyclist to ensure his/her understanding and compliance with standing regulations.

Aboard USS *John L. Hall* (FFG-32)

This ship took an innovative approach to identifying high-risk/problem drinkers with an electronic polling method that uses the group e-mail features of Microsoft Outlook. The command DAPA developed a confidential, cost-effective, and time-saving method of polling the crew individually to find those who felt they had a drinking problem.

With the DAPA’s method, Sailors used the voting-button option in Microsoft Outlook to choose “yes,” “no” or “maybe.” All hands received the note, selected their response, and returned it



People who drink and drive...



...cause crashes like this...

to the command DAPA, who was the only person who knew how each participating crew member responded. Because most Sailors today are computer savvy, they felt comfortable using the voting-button function. This survey turned up 11 people who otherwise might not have come to the command's attention until after they had had an alcohol-related mishap. All 11 received counseling and assistance.

For detailed information on using the voting-button option in Microsoft Outlook, enter the keywords "voting button" in Microsoft Outlook help.

Aboard USS Shreveport (LPD-12)

One of the most impressive and influential tools this ship used was putting the wrecked car from a drunk-driving crash at the foot of the brow. A local insurance company donated the car, and every crew member had to look at it as they left the ship each day on leave or liberty. The car was a constant reminder of the severe and potentially lethal consequences of a totally preventable mishap.

The CO capitalized on this reminder with an alcohol-deglamorization program as a command-wide incentive to stay out of trouble. All divisions were challenged to attain zero alcohol-related incidents during the post-deployment stand-down and subsequent yard period. Zero incidents earned division members a day off.

Aboard USS Benfold (DDG-65)

At the start of CY2004, this ship's chain of command noticed an alarming increase in alcohol and drug violations. They subsequently invited

the Naval Consolidated Brig, Miramar, to hold a decision-making workshop for all hands. The brig brought individuals to share their dramatic stories about how one bad decision had changed their seemingly normal lives forever.

Aboard USS Mustin (DDG-89)

To encourage Sailors not to get behind the wheel after they have been drinking, this ship grants alcohol-awareness days off to duty sections that stay incident-free for 90 days. The results have been a 60-percent reduction in alcohol-related incidents from last year.

Aboard USS Gonzalez (DDG-66)

This ship hosted a visit by a Virginia Beach Police officer, experienced in drunk-driving accidents. He showed a slide presentation of real

Photo used with permission



accident scenes related to alcohol, excessive speed, and nighttime driving. The officer also opened the floor to questions related to Virginia driving laws. Crew feedback from the presentation was overwhelmingly positive, and, at last check,

...in which innocent victims lose their lives. This 18-year-old Marine was injured seriously and later died when a drunk driver, who was fleeing from the police in a stolen vehicle, slammed into a military shuttle that was stopped for a red light. Four other Marines in the shuttle van with this victim also were injured badly.



Navy photo by PH3 Jason R. Zalasky

A Virginia state trooper briefs Sailors aboard USS *George Washington* (CVN-73) on the dangers of drinking and driving as the ship prepares to return home from a six-month deployment.

the ship had had no driving-related incidents since this brief.

Another program that has had a positive impact on driver safety is the three hours of instruction the shipboard AAA driving instructor provides each month to junior members of the command.

Aboard USS *Essex* (LHD-2)

The traffic-safety program aboard this ship yielded zero lost/light-duty workdays from traffic mishaps. Crewmen, as well as dependents who wish to participate, attend driver-education training. Anyone involved in a traffic mishap must re-take the course.

The ship's motorcycle riders are tracked meticulously in a database, which reveals all of them have attended the Motorcycle Safety Foundation Rider course.

As the numbers show, these two examples of intrusive leadership work.

Aboard USS *Leyte Gulf* (CG-55)

This ship's return from deployment brought a renewed concern for off-duty safety. During stand-down, the ship lost a shipmate who was hit by a car while crossing the street. Moving violations and DUI convictions also increased.

The CO addressed these issues with all hands

and stressed the importance of safety vigilance at work and at play. The ship then issued taxi cards to all personnel and maintained a petty-cash fund to cover emergency fares. They also pursued safety-training opportunities provided by civilian professionals, initially arranging a Street Smart presentation, which addressed DUI prevention and driving safety for a target audience of 19-to-26-year-olds.

Aboard USS *Vincennes* (CG-49)

Besides having a taxi fund as a safeguard against DUIs, this ship maintains a breathalyzer on the quarterdeck, which is used strictly as a tool to identify Sailors who may need extra education or treatment. Different BACs result in varying actions and provides a trip-wire for a drunk watch being required, as well as the member having a medical evaluation and/or DAPA screening.

Vincennes mandated a drinking limit of 0.13—the basis that flags a Sailor as possibly at risk of hurting himself or others or committing an act that results in a liberty incident. Research of incidents that have occurred shows that Sailors involved usually have a BAC of 0.15 or higher. Introduction of the breathalyzer program and the mandated responsible drinking limit has produced a considerable reduction in the number of alcohol-related incidents.

Each division chief aboard *Vincennes* also has his/her Sailors complete a liberty POA&M before entering port or before the start of a weekend. This POA&M requires the Sailors to explain what their liberty plans are, whom they are going out with, and how much they plan to drink. The POA&M can be tailored for any port; it addresses the drinking age of the country being visited and lists MWR functions available.

The Sailors then individually sit down for a one-on-one interview with the LPO, chief, and/or division officer to discuss their liberty plans. If a Sailor does have an incident, the entire chain of command must report to the CO the next morning and explain what could have been done to prevent the incident.

Aboard USS *Tarawa* (LHA-1)

This ship's safety department developed a motorcycle database that tracks current information

on all known motorcycle operators among the crew. This database contains such information as the date a Sailor completes a DoD motorcycle-rider course; the date a Sailor's driver's license is endorsed for motorcycles; the make, model and displacement of a Sailor's motorcycle; a Sailor's riding experience; and how he/she plans to use the motorcycle (e.g., daily commute, recreational, off-road, day/night operation).

All departments ensure that the information entered is accurate, complete and updated for all personnel through a LAN share-drive-accessed database. Any gains or losses within a department are monitored by the safety department and are adjusted accordingly in the database. The safety department uses this database to track *Tarawa's* newly required motorcycle-refresher training for all motorcycle operators.

Upon initial check-in, *Tarawa* Sailors are briefed on Navy and command policy for motorcycle operators. The safety department enters all incoming riders into the database, then has them read and sign a locally generated motorcycle-rider



Navy photo by Matthew J. Thomas

Shipboard Sailors watch a paramedic demonstrate an emergency-medical procedure he often has to perform at the scene of a car crash. Sponsored by Anheuser-Busch Companies, Inc., free *Street Smart* presentations like this one are being shown around the fleet as a means of educating Sailors about making responsible choices.



Navy photo by JO1 James G. Pinsky

A ship's CO addresses the crew before setting liberty. Among the usual topics is drinking and driving.

page 13. All current motorcycle operators have the same page 13 in their service jackets.

To further educate and enhance the skills of motorcycle operators, the ship initiated a requirement that all current riders have advanced training. The safety department handles all scheduling for the advanced course, which will be renewed every three years. This three-year refresher requirement coincides with base-sticker renewal periodicity and the average sea/shore rotations.

On a periodic basis, the *Tarawa* CO meets with all motorcycle riders to review safety lessons learned. This forum helps maintain situational awareness of the inherent danger of riding motorcycles and reduces the attitude of "it can't happen to me." ■